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Papers Presented Before the Section of Social and Economic Science of The American Association for the Advancement of Science

SOME PRELIMINARIES OF PEACE¹

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A YEAR ago, at St. Louis, we were discussing the merits of the League of Nations as a mechanism for securing the world's peace. It was then pointed out that the Covenant of the League undertakes to accomplish two separate and different purposes—the execution of the Treaty of Versailles and the establishment of permanent peace in the future. It was then made evident not only that these two purposes are disparate, but that the means to be employed for the realization of them must be different.

Before we can discuss intelligently the problem of permanent peace, it is necessary to distinguish between the termination of an actual state of war and the establishment of the conditions of permanent peace in the future.

An actual war is normally terminated by the exercise of superior force; for war is, by its very nature, a contest of opposing forces, each seeking the mastery of its opponent. The war with Germany, for example, could be terminated in no other way than by overpowering the enemy's forces and compelling the vanquished to accept terms of peace imposed by the conqueror. Such terms were embodied in the Treaty of Versailles and accepted by Germany. Whether they are just or unjust is not in this place a question to be considered. The important point to emphasize is that they were *terms imposed by force*, and that the Covenant of the League of Nations was designed as an instrument to carry them into execution. It creates an armed military and political alliance for the enforcement of the Peace of Versailles.

Considered from this point of view, the League of Nations has a legitimate reason for existence; but why neutral nations, or any nations not associated in the war and directly responsible for the particular peace imposed, should be incorporated in the League, is a question that requires an answer. The obvious answer is, that it is intended to maintain the future peace of Europe *by an armed coalition*.

That this is really the purpose of the existing League of Nations

¹Address of the President and Chairman of the Social and Economic Science Section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Chicago, December 28, 1920.

is evident from the pledge contained in Article X to preserve, unconditionally, the territorial integrity and political independence of every Member of the League; and from the provisions of Article XVI, which declares that a state of war with all the Members of the League will arise, *ipso facto*, whenever a Member fails to comply with the obligations of the Covenant. In express terms, therefore, it is a *war* league, not a *peace* league; since peace is to be preserved, not by voluntary agreement to observe certain principles, but by the threat of war. The conclusion is inescapable that the league is a compact for the exercise of economic and military force, to be brought into operation automatically whenever a provision of the treaty is violated.

It would seem superfluous to insist that this attempt to base the peace of the world on an exercise of economic and military force is a preparation for permanent peace. The settlement of a past war on the terms of the victors, whatever they may be, and the prevention of future wars, are clearly undertakings so fundamentally different, and in truth so incompatible, that they are not to be accomplished by the same means or in the same manner. We rightly use force to subdue an enemy who challenges our rights; but we can not base permanent peace upon the pretension of any group of nations that a nation wronged may not defend its rights by force of arms, except by the permission of that group.

And here it is important to note the fact, that there are in Europe, including the United Kingdom, according to the latest statistics, 247,848,168 inhabitants, occupying a territory of 1,410,219 square miles, who are represented by their governments in the League of Nations; and 271,701,401 inhabitants, occupying 2,721,118 square miles, who are not represented in the League of Nations—that is, the non-members in Europe *exceed* the members of the League of Nations in Europe by 23,653,233, occupying territory of *twice* the extent of that occupied by the inhabitants of Europe, including the United Kingdom, represented in the league.

At present, it is true, the league contains the nations possessing the greater military strength; but it does not follow that this will always be the case, especially if there should be dissensions among the members of the league. At most, the league represents only a small preponderance of military efficiency, consisting chiefly in the possession of superior armament, and not at all in numbers. The retention of this preponderance will require the enforcement of the policy of preventing the non-members from arming, while the members continue to maintain their armed forces. But this is, in effect, a continuation of a latent state of war.

It can not, therefore, be said that, even if the terms of the treaties made at Versailles, St. Germain and Sèvres can be enforced, they insure

the permanent peace of Europe. This is not to affirm that the victory of the Allies was not an essential step toward permanent peace. On the contrary, it was absolutely necessary. The lesson it has taught is, that, however formidable an aggressor may appear at the moment of aggression, the world can not be permanently ruled by military force. The appeal to force is in itself a challenge to all that is highest and best in human nature. The resort to military force as a means of maintaining the right to control the action of other nations is in its very nature a menace of despotism, and there never has been, and never will be, any permanent despotism in human history.

Herein lies the fallacy of the whole theory of enforcing peace universally by military power. There never was, and there never can be, any permanent exclusive monopoly in the power to enforce the conditions of peace. The mere pretense of possessing it is a declaration of war. The reason is that this pretension strikes a fatal blow at the whole theory of self-government, for it implies a superiority of right and of judgment in the possessors of power which no nation can rightly claim to possess alone, and which no self-constituted council of nations can vindicate the right to exercise.

When civilization is attacked, it will always find means to defend itself; but civilization can never be more plainly or more fundamentally attacked than when a self-constituted combination of powers assumes the authority to say that a nation shall not vindicate its rights by force of arms when there is no other available means of redress.

What then is the true foundation of peace? It is the provision of means of redress without a resort to arms. It is the recognition of a right to those conditions of life that are essential to the satisfaction of a people's needs, and the establishment of a tribunal before which a nation's wrongs may obtain the judgment of a just judge.

I have spoken of the rights and wrongs of nations, because the existence of organized nations is not only a historic fact but a human necessity. There cannot be a world government that is not supported by national governments; for government, aside from futile dreams of universal empire, is of necessity local in its bases. It is a process of development by which families and communities establish the conditions of life with their neighbors. History is largely made up of the efforts of men to impose upon others submission to their control, but it has never anywhere been permanently successful except by the consent of the governed. The whole foundation of peace must be sought through the recognition of that consent.

The basis of human life is material subsistence. The standard of peaceful living is accepted law. These are the essential prerequisites of permanent peace. Without them it is illusory to try to enforce it anywhere.

What is needed at this time is a reorganization of the Society of Nations *as a whole*, including *all peoples* that maintain a responsible government; and the test of responsible government is acceptance of International Law, which is based on the inherent rights of sovereign States, and obedience to that law. What International Law *is* can only be determined by a properly constituted international tribunal. It should be a tribunal to which all responsible governments may appeal, *of right*, for the redress of their wrongs. What International Law *is to become* will depend upon the willingness of the nations to accept freely and support faithfully the principles of jurisprudence which are held to be governing in civilized states, and these are not difficult to determine.

Can it be claimed that it is the prerogative of any minority league to make the Law of Nations, and to apply it through a tribunal created exclusively by itself? If not, is it not evident that the league can not by its superior force, make itself a substitute for the Society of Nations? Does it not then become clear that the reorganization of the Society of Nations must be accomplished by the cooperation of nations outside of the league with those inside of it?

To this it may be answered, that the Society of Nations could be completed by eventually admitting *all* responsible nations into the league.

This would be so if the league were not a military alliance, and were open to all responsible nations, without other conditions than their voluntary consent to enter it and their free participation in amending it; but the nature of the existing league does not admit of this choice and this freedom. It is a predetermined compact, designed not to meet the necessities of a free association of equals, but to carry out the purposes of the victors in rendering the vanquished powerless now and hereafter. It would be illogical, for example, to admit Germany into this league, which has been organized expressly to impose penalties upon that nation; and admission would never be sought for any other purpose than defeating the object of the league in this respect. And yet, why has not Germany, if able to maintain a responsible government, having accepted the terms of peace imposed, a perfect right to a place in the Society of Nations, and to appeal to a neutral tribunal capable of deciding whether or not she fulfills her treaty obligations? If a nation, though conquered, has not that right does it not continue to be at the complete mercy of its conquerors?

It will perhaps be said, that, until a conquered nation has fully paid all the penalties imposed upon it, there can be no certainty that it possesses a responsible government, and should, therefore, be excluded from the Society of States.

If this position be accepted, what hope is there of ever arriving

at peace? Can peace really be made with a nation whose government is not responsible? Can a nation ever form and maintain a responsible government, unless it entertains the hope that through it peace can be made? Is there any prospect of ever executing a peace, unless it is assumed that it is made with a responsible government? In brief, what motive is there to accept, and attempt to fulfill, the terms of peace imposed, if a nation is to be wholly excluded from the Society of Nations, is not accorded equal rights under the Law of Nations, and has not the right to appeal to a neutral tribunal to determine whether or not it has fulfilled its obligations? If those obligations may be arbitrarily interpreted, and especially if they may, from time to time, be arbitrarily increased, with no opportunity of redress, what becomes of the pretension that peace has been made?

Would not a full conference of responsible states—the standard of responsibility being full acceptance of International Law and actual conformity to it—where the members of the Society of Nations might meet as juristic equals, furnish an occasion for reorganizing that Society in its true sense? Could not the nations, both victors and vanquished, meet there upon the assumption that a formal peace having been made, a friendly disposition might make that peace effective between the peoples that have been at war? Obviously, no such meeting as this could be held under the auspices of the League of Nations, while organized as a military and political alliance.

Would such a meeting of the Society of Nations, confined to specific peaceful purposes, furnish new occasions for collision?

The answer lies in the will of the peoples of Europe. If there is a sincere general desire for peace, a real peace is possible. If there is not such a desire, the League of Nations certainly can not long preserve the peace by force of arms.

We need not enter here into any discussion of American policies. These are now under consideration by responsible and competent authorities, and it is to be hoped that they will be framed in a sense to unite every party and every faction of the American people upon a course that will give us peace and at the same time enable us to fulfill every obligation of national duty. But here, in this gathering of men and women devoted to truth for its own sake, and to the recognition of those facts which form the material of social and economic science, it is not beyond our province to consider, as we have attempted to do, the grounds on which permanent peace may be established. We are not indulging in theory, but are merely interpreting human experience, when we say, that among the necessary preliminaries of lasting peace are the conditions of life which meet the essential needs of men and of nations, and a bar of justice before which the wrongs of nations may be presented for at least that measure of redress which the unselfish opinion of civilized mankind can give.